

VZCZCXRO9267

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RUEHYG
DE RUEHWR #0695/01 1871458
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 061458Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8554
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000695

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CE (PIERANGELO, GLANTZ)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CODEL NELSON: POLAND EXPECTS THE U.S. TO HONOR ITS
COMMITMENTS

¶1. (U) This message is SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- not for
Internet distribution.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Poland expects the United States to honor
commitments made in August 2008 agreements on Missile Defense
(MD) and security cooperation. Foreign policy advisors to
President Kaczynski and PM Tusk told Senator Ben Nelson
(R-NE) that the U.S.-Polish relationship is important for
Poland's security, noting that a U.S. military presence would
bolster Article 5 guarantees and improve bilateral security
cooperation. While Presidential advisors expressed
skepticism about efforts to reset U.S.-Russian relations, the
head of the Prime Minister's Chancellery and the chair of the
Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee expressed hope that improved
relations would benefit Poland and dissipate the occasional
aggressive statements from Russia. Officials reiterated
Poland's strong commitment to the ISAF mission in
Afghanistan, stressing its importance for NATO's future. END
SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) During a June 28-30 visit to Warsaw, Senator Ben
Nelson (R-NE) met with Aleksander Szczyglo, head of the
President's National Security Office; Tomasz Arabski, head of
the Prime Minister's Chancellery; and Andrzej Halicki, chair
of the Sejm (lower house of parliament) Foreign Affairs
Committee. Senator Nelson's meeting with Foreign Minister
Radoslaw Sikorski is reported septel.

PRESIDENTIAL CHANCELLERY: MISSILE DEFENSE, AFGHANISTAN, AND
NATO

¶4. (SBU) Aleksander Szczyglo, head of the President's
National Security Office, told Senator Nelson that the
U.S.-Polish relationship is the "most important" for Poland's
security. He stressed President Kaczynski's strong interest
in seeing Missile Defense (MD) move forward. Asked for an
assessment of the current state of play, Senator Nelson
explained that President Obama had ordered a review of the MD
project, which does not necessarily mean rejection, just
reconsideration. Nelson stated that the U.S. decision would
depend to a large degree on the outcome of Czech elections in
September. He said that the reductions for European MD
reflected in the FY10 budget are not indicative of future
plans with regard to MD.

¶5. (SBU) Szczyglo stated that giving up the MD project would
be "unwise" given Iran and North Korea's ongoing efforts to
develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. While
Russian opposition to MD is an important consideration,
Moscow knows the project does not pose an offensive threat
and would be no match for Russian ICBMs. A U.S. installation

in Poland would mean an increase in U.S. and NATO commitment to Poland's defense, he argued. "If even one U.S. soldier is threatened, we know you will send in an entire division," he said. In contrast, because not all NATO members interpret Article 5 literally, guarantees on paper alone are not sufficient to ease Polish concerns about "resurgent Russian imperialism." Nelson told Szczyglo most Americans are well aware of Poland's concerns about Russia's history of aggression, but said it was important to have civil relations with Russia without sacrificing interests. He stressed the U.S. commitment to Article 5 guarantees and said that the U.S. would continue to support Polish defense modernization, especially as Poland completes its transition to an all-volunteer force. A Polish military that is highly trained and well equipped would help to guarantee that NATO functions effectively. Turning to Patriots, Nelson expressed hope that the process would quickly move from negotiations to a final decision. .

¶6. (SBU) Szczyglo welcomed Nelson's expression of U.S. gratitude for Poland's contributions in Afghanistan. He said that the ISAF mission is particularly important because of its impact on NATO's operating model. Szczyglo and Nelson agreed that the primary problem is not with the number of troops, but with caveats placed on troop activity by some NATO members. Poland refuses to accept the tenet that some countries are permitted to contribute resources in lieu of fighting and vice versa, Szczyglo said. Szczyglo and Nelson agreed on the need to keep the door to NATO open for Georgia and Ukraine. Even the newest and smallest members should be expected to carry their own weight. Nelson suggested that NATO should identify how smaller and newer members might participate most effectively and then encourage those members to modernize and pursue specialization accordingly.

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PM'S CHANCELLERY: NO RE-INTERPRETATION OF MD COMMITMENTS

¶7. (SBU) Tomasz Arabski, Chief of the Prime Minister's Chancellery, emphasized the importance that Poland attached to last year's agreements on MD and security cooperation. He acknowledged that it was "natural" for a new presidential administration to review the MD program, but he stressed that Poland expected the commitments embodied in last year's agreements to be honored "in the spirit in which they were concluded." For its part, Poland remained flexible and was prepared to meet its MD obligations -- bilaterally with the U.S., within a NATO framework, or even with Russian participation -- but Warsaw would not appreciate a "re-interpretation" of commitments as agreed last year. Infrastructure improvements were already taking place near Slupsk, the proposed MD site.

¶8. (SBU) Arabski said the upcoming U.S.-Russia summit in Moscow was a new opportunity to improve bilateral relations. Such a development would benefit Poland and dissipate the occasional aggressive statements from Russia. Arabski explained, however, that Russia was not the only "eastern neighbor" that concerned Poland. Pointing to the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute earlier this year as an example, he asserted that Poland could face a number of unstable scenarios in the future. Deployment of a permanent Patriot battery would improve Polish air defense capabilities but, more importantly, signal to others that Poland was serious about defending itself. Patriots would also solidify already excellent U.S.-Polish relations, although Arabski remarked that the U.S. had offered Patriots to the United Arab Emirates at a lower price than initially quoted to Poland.

SEJM: MISSILE DEFENSE, RUSSIA, VISAS

¶9. (SBU) Andrzej Halicki, newly appointed Chair of the Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee, lauded the excellent state of U.S.-Polish relations but said it was necessary to build a strong security relationship as well. In this context, the

agreements concluded with the U.S. last August on MD and security cooperation were politically and militarily significant for Warsaw. He welcomed the reference to Poland and the Czech Republic in President Obama's April 4 arms control speech in Prague and hoped that increased cooperation between the U.S. and Russia would lead eventually to a mitigation of the potential nuclear threat posed by Iran. To this end, it was important for all NATO allies to speak with a single voice. Halicki also hoped that improved dialogue with Moscow would moderate Russia's aggressive tendencies and contribute to a more secure regional environment.

¶10. (SBU) Halicki highlighted Poland's increasing role in fighting terrorism, especially in Afghanistan, where PM Tusk had almost doubled the Polish contingent. Poland was also in the forefront among NATO allies in defense spending and military modernization. Turning to non-security issues, Halicki maintained that Poland would do its best to meet U.S. criteria to allow for visa-free travel by Poles in the future, but he was concerned that the imminent expiration of the 10 percent refusal threshold under the Visa Waiver Program might have a negative impact on relations.

¶11. (U) CODEL Nelson has cleared this message.
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